

the Surf Pines Breeze

Water Water Everywhere



"And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth..."

If not of truly mythic proportions, the flooding caused by the almost unprecedented rainfall of recent months has certainly made residents of Ocean Drive in Surf Pines wish for the comforts of a well-constructed ark to ferry them to and from their homes. Since January large pools of water have been spreading from the wetlands and building up in low parts of Ocean, Horizon Lane and at the bottom of High Surf. As the size of the pools increased, the waters migrated south; with each new storm greater areas of the roadway were covered and the water, having no place to go, increased in depth. By late January it had become chancy to drive a car along stretches of Ocean Drive and by mid-February there were three to four feet of water in the road, effectively closing much of the south half, as well as a stretch north of Horizon, to vehicles.

In consequence, residents of Ocean Drive have faced considerable hardship. Unable to drive to and from their homes, they

have left their cars parked along the higher roads and carried children and supplies through the water. Last month a walkway of sand bags was constructed opposite 2010 Ocean to permit passage. But service vehicles such as school buses, mail and newspaper deliverers and emergency services could not reach homes from High Surf to the south end. In all, some fifteen families have been affected and water has made its way into two houses.

An Act of God or Man?

Among the commoner human failings is the tendency to blame someone else when things go wrong. So it is not surprising or unreasonable that some affected residents have concluded that construction of the road in the Pinehurst development just south of the Surf Pines property line has blocked drainage and caused the water to accumulate.

They brought their concerns to the Board of Directors (Allan Cellars acting as president in the absence of Dick Tevis and two other board officers) and to the Clatsop County Board of Commissioners.

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High Water Factors

The Surf Pines board consulted several experts and learned that the situation is complicated by a number of factors:

- **Between** October 1 and March 15, 80.71 inches of rain have fallen on this area of the north coast. Normal rainfall for that period is 47.34 inches. This deluge comes on the heels of several years of above-average precipitation. Water in the ground was, therefore, higher than normal at the start of this rain year.
- **Vegetation** in the lakes and wetlands and mineral deposits that have formed over many decades make the sandy bottoms of the waterlands less permeable than we might think they are.
- **Increased** development with more roads, homes and driveways has reduced the area that can absorb the rain.
- **Water** has been accumulating for the last several years in increasing quantity on some of our roads, notably Horizon Lane and in low areas of Ocean Drive. We would therefore have expected some standing water in the roads even if considerably less rain had fallen.
- **When** an inch of rain falls on an area the size of Surf Pines (approximately one and a quarter square miles) somewhere around 22 million gallons of water, at a conservative figure, are added. When we consider the more than 80 inches of rain so far this year, we have some measure of the problem. And the rains continue.

Association News

Well might one wonder whether the rising waters have eclipsed other events in Surf Pines. In fact, for most of us who are unaffected by the flooding, life has had its usual concerns.

Mailbox Vandalism

The penultimate year of the twentieth century started here with an epidemic of youthful vandalism. On at least three successive weekends beginning January 17, many vulnerable mailboxes were destroyed. Plastic boxes were blown up with firecrackers; metal ones were bashed viciously. In many cases, the same residents lost their boxes repeatedly, presumably because they were easily accessible and not too close to houses. On the third occasion the culprits were observed in action by Jim Lucas, who called the sheriff's department. Four young boys, aged 15 and 16, none of them a Surf Pines resident, were caught. Known victims have been offered apologies and reimbursement for the damage done. But the boys confessed to only one of the incidents and to attacking only four boxes. The many other victims of the earlier attacks can only hope that the virus has run its course, at least for some time to come. Youngsters who might be tempted to copy the adventures of the vandals may perhaps be discouraged by the possibility of being caught in the act.

Puddles gathered and congregated all along Ocean Drive. By mid-February, floodwater covered most of the road surface, as this submerged fire hydrant attests.



photo: Leslie & Brian Cameron

North Gate

It took far longer than anticipated for the damaged north gate to be replaced. As reported in the December Breeze, the gate was hit one stormy night by a power truck and completely overturned. Repairs were held up by the weather but the concrete was finally poured, the gate and housing were delivered and weeks went by. Some people felt that the vandalism was due to the absence of a gate. Last week the gate was put in place but remained non-functional because some parts had not been delivered. By mid-afternoon March 20, it was up and running. Gene Keever expects it to remain healthy for some time to come.

Camping on the Beach

As previously announced, the Oregon Parks and Recreation Commission held a public hearing in January at the Warrenton Community Center on whether to close the beach from Fort Stevens to Gearhart to overnight camping. There was a large turnout of local residents to hear about the conditions the park administration had found on the beach and their recommendations to the commission.

In short, park staff recorded that only about 25% of campers disposed of their refuse adequately. The vast majority brought no

sanitary facilities. Over the Labor Day weekend, staff counted 113 campsites of various sizes on the beach. Recommendations included instituting a series of progressive measures to deal with undesirable behavior. One proposal is to have campers register to camp overnight and there is discussion of charging fees. However, the department's resources are severely limited, both in terms of money and manpower, and new rules will inevitably increase costs. The full staff report and recommendations are available to the public from the Parks and Recreation Department. A copy is in Surf Pines files.

At the meeting, many Surf Pines residents spoke to urge that overnight camping be curtailed because of the health and safety hazards caused by careless campers. While a few people voiced concerns about limiting public access to the beach, only one speaker was completely opposed to the actions recommended by the staff. At its April meeting in Salem, the commission will make a decision on changing the policy regarding overnight camping.

Swiftly flowing water may soothe a vacationer's rattled nerves; flowing swiftly through the junction of Ocean Drive and High Surf, it makes no resident's outlook merry.



photo: Marge Bloomfield

Water, from page 1

Solutions?

At the February 24th meeting of the county Board of Commissioners, a group of residents presented graphic evidence of conditions in Surf Pines and asked for whatever relief the county could provide. Specifically, they asked whether any public funds are available to alleviate the situation; requested the planning department to inspect the Pinehurst work where it abuts the south end of Ocean Drive to make sure that all relevant conditions of the permit have been observed; and asked what emergency help the county could offer. Mike Ward presented a letter to the commissioners documenting the flooding with photographs and statistics. Many other residents spoke of their problems and several technical experts testified as well.

The commissioners could offer no financial relief or technical help, since Surf Pines is a private development and owns the roads. The planning director, Bill Arnold, agreed to ascertain whether Pinehurst developers were following the conditions attached to their permit and the park department gave emergency permission to pump water out to the beach.

The Short Term

The board authorized rental of a pump and other necessary equipment on a test basis to see if the water level could be reduced. It was tried for two days and seemed effective, although when pumping stopped and the rains continued the water rose again. The board, with George Von Weller in charge of the operation and Ken Weber sharing a large part of the work, rented a pump and 1000 feet of pipe to carry the water out to the beach. By March 7 that pump was operating at least sixteen hours a day and sometimes for 24 hours at the junction of Ocean and High Surf. In addition, the pump being used in Pinehurst was lent to the effort to draw down the water level at the south end of Ocean. Together the two pumps have reduced the water level but at this writing the lower end of Ocean still has too much water to permit passage of an ordinary sedan.

Meantime, a group of at least 12 people collaborated on building the sandbag

bridge. Camp Rilea provided the bags and sand from the Dittmers' property (2024 Ocean) was used to construct the walkway just south of the driveway to 2010 Ocean. Two plastic pipes were placed beneath the sandbags to form a culvert for the water, and the bridge was built almost three feet high. When the crisis is over, residents plan to dry out the bags and keep them for future emergencies.

The Long Term

The board has been mulling over actions to prevent such flooding in the future. Consultants, including a geologist and engineers, have suggested such remedies as raising the level of the roads above possible flooding; placing culverts beneath the transverse roads and ditching to provide a channel for the water; buying a pump that would automatically operate when rising water reached a danger level. Every remedy involves substantial cost and the board is looking at all the options and the best technical advice they can get. A decision on the best remedy is obviously not imminent. When all the information is in hand and cost estimates are available, it may be necessary to convene a special membership meeting. Members will be kept informed.

Costs

Pumping work that has already been done and is continuing has cost an as yet unknown amount. Reserves that had been built up a few years ago have been spent on the large road works of last summer and replacement of the gate housings, so there is not a fund of any substance to pay for the emergency work. The board has therefore voted to levy a special assessment, in accord with provisions of Article X of the Articles of Incorporation and Article 9.3 of the Bylaws, of \$100 per owner of improved property and \$50 for unimproved property owners. The April billing will include this special assessment. This year's flooding is certainly as "true" an emergency as has ever faced the Surf Pines Association in its almost 30-year history.

Among the other weather related costs of the past few months is the loss of an estimated 300 trees on the right of way and at least as many on private property. Robert Stineman and his Young's River Trees

crew have spent many days clearing trees, transporting the pump from Portland and helping the operation.

Clearly, without some paid services, the pumping would have been impossible. But it would have been just as impossible without all the volunteer work and expertise of many residents. George Von Weller and Ken Weber in particular have worked day and night to keep the pumps functioning, making sure of the fuel supply, measuring the water level at various points, and, at times, fending off complaints from individuals irritated at the inconveniences of the situation. We all owe them an enormous debt of gratitude.

Others whose contributions have made a real difference include Mike Ward, who did much to get needed information and who made an excellent presentation to the county commission; Brian and Leslie Cameron, who helped coordinate the efforts of Ocean Avenue residents in building the bridge and in testifying to the commission.

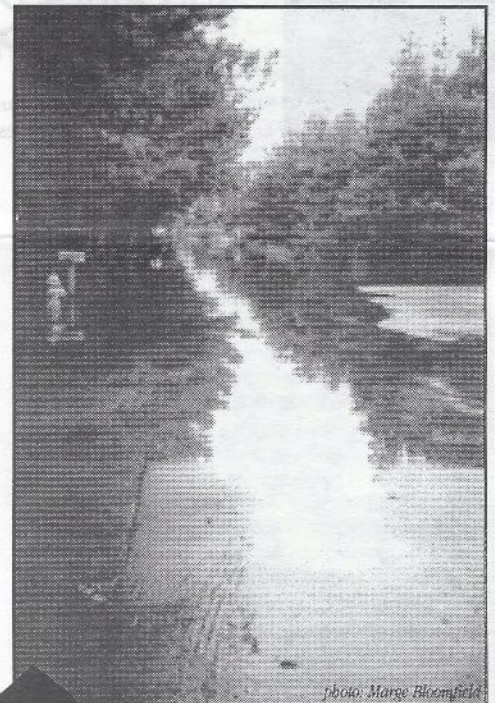


photo: Marge Bloomfield

To look north on Ocean Drive in February was to see one of the county's newest creekbeds.



THE PIPELINE

Surf Pines Water Association Announcements

March, 1999

The water board announces three changes:

They have suspended for the present the quarterly charge of \$10 for administrative costs.

Tom Wilcox has replaced Burr Allegaert on the board and is taking over Bob Black's responsibility for technical affairs.

Kay Lockett has replaced Bob Black on the board. Bob, having seen the system safely upgraded and turned over to Warrenton's management, has retired to private life.

Surf Pines Association Board of Directors

President	Dick Tevis	2252 Lucas Drive	738-3111
Vice President	John McGowan	2510 Malarkey Drive	861-3732
Secretary	Jerry Whalen	2509 Malarkey	861-4367
Ass't Secretary	Paulina Cockrum	11 Surf Pines Landing Drive	738-5789
Treasurer	Allen Cellars	2263 Lakeside Court	771-0628
At Large	George VonWeller	2332 Manion Drive	738-5982
At Large	Ralph Todd	2722 Sliverspot Lane	861-9771

the Surf Pines *Breeze*

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Members are invited to contribute articles or comments, letters to the editor, or anything fit to print. Don't hesitate - shoot the *Breeze*!

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Spring Cleaning Rummage Sale

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at Pacific Grange

(not in Surf Pines)

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